Department of State TELEGRAM

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-02 INR-06 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 OPW-01 IO-11
RSR-01 SSO-00 /086 W
119499

P R 221025Z AUG 71
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9001
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG
USDEL FRANCE
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 1/26/82
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ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☐ RELEASABLE☑
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA*or FOI EXEMPTIONS _____

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SUBJ: KY DELAYS DECISION ON CANDIDACY

REF: SAIGON 13464

1. SUMMARY. AT LOW KEY AUGUST 22 PRESS CONFERENCE (SUMMARY SENT REFTEL VICE PRESIDENT KY STATED THAT HE IS STILL CONSULTING WITH RELIGIOUS AND POLITCAL GROUPS AND ACCORDINGLY WILL DELAY ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS DECISION ON PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY FOR 24 TO 48 HOURS. KY AVOIDED DIRECT ANSWERS TO MOST QUESTIONS FROM REPORTERS. HIS AIDES LATER INDICATED TO EMBOFFS THAT POSITION OF AN QUANG BUDDHIST GROUP TOWARD KY'S CANDIDACY WILL BE "DECISIVE" FACTOR IN DECISION. END SUMMARY.

2. OBVIOUSLY WARY AFTER ALL NIGHT CONSULTATIONS, KY HELD PRESS CONFERENCE 0900 AUGUST 22 AND MADE OPENING STATEMENT AS FOLLOWS:

3. BEGIN TEXT. THE OBJECT OF THIS CONFERENCE SHOULD HAVE BEEN FOR US TO ANNOUNCE FOR DECISION CONCERNING THE ELECTIONS. THE MEETING WAS TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE YESTERDAY BUT WE HAD TO DELAY IT. I KNOW THAT YOU ARE FOLLOWING THIS MATTER VERY CAREFULLY AND

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ONCE AGAIN I MUST EXCUSE MYSELF BECAUSE WE ARE NOT READY TO GIVE OUR DECISION. I BEG YOU TO BEAR WITH ME.THE REASON FOR OUR DELAY IS THAT WE ARE CONSCIOUS OF OUR RESPONSIBILITY WHICH IS EXTREMELY GRAVE IN THE FACE OF THE DIFFICULT SITUATION FACING OUR NATION.

4. THOSE DIFFICULTIES COME FROM THE FACT THAT MR. THIEU HAS HAD NO CONSIDERATION FOR THE PEOPLE AND FOR PUBLIC OPINION. HIS SCHEME TO ESTABLISH PERSONAL POWER AND TO RIG THE ELECTIONS HAS LEAD TO THE CURRENT SITUATION WHICH IS A VERY DIFFICULT CRISIS. WE BELIEVE THE CRISIS MUST BE RESOLVED, OTHERWISE THE NATION WILL BE IN GRAVE DANGER. THIS IS WHY I BELIEVE THAT OUR DECISION CANNOT BE MADE IN HASTE AND THAT WE MUST TAKE SOME TIME TO CONSULT WITH THE LEADING POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS FORCES IN THE NATION. THAT IS WHY TODAY I SHALL NOT ANNOUNCE OUR DECISION AND I WILL SEE YOU LATER IN ANOTHER MEETING.

5. HOWEVER I WILL RESERVE ONE HALF HOUR TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE RECENT EVENTS. I ASK THAT YOU NOT ASK QUESTIONS REGARDING OUR DECISION BECAUSE IT IS NOT READY AT THIS TIME. END TEXT.

6. IN ANSWERING REPORTERS' QUESTIONS, KY PERSISTENTLY REFUSED TO INDICATE WHETHER OR NOT HE WOULD RUN, REITERATED HE WOULD DISCLOSE HIS DECISION WITH 24 OR 48 HOURS. HE OTHERWISE RESPONDED IN A GENERALLY EVASIVE AND RESTRAINED MANNER.

7. KY CONFIRMED THAT HE HAD A MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR BUNKER AUGUST 21 AND THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD URGED HIM "TO BE A CANDIDATE IN THE INTERESTS OF THE NATION". KY ALSO CONFIRMED THAT HE HAD SEEN GENERAL MINH ON THE SAME DAY BUT REFUSED TO DISCLOSE THE DETAILS OF THIS CONVERSATION. HE SAID: "GENERAL MINH HAS OFFERED NO ADVICE: THIS IS A DECISON WE WILL TAKE INDEPENDENTLY."

8. COMMENTING ON THE PROSPECTS OF RIGGED ELECTIONS, KY STATED THAT MINH'S "SECRET DOCUMENTS" ON ELECTORAL FRAUD WERE NOT YET 50 PERCENT" FULFILLED BUT SUBSEQUENTLY NOTED THAT THE ENTIRE PEOPLE ARE ALREADY 100 PERCENT CONVINCED THAT THE ELECTIONS WILL NOT BE HONEST.

9. KY SAID THAT SUPREME COURT DECISION "NEITHER SURPRISED NOT PLEASED" HIM. COMMENTING ON THE ELECTORAL LAW'S PROHIBITIONS

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ON A CANDIDATE'S WITHDRAWAL FOLLOWING THE SECOND POSTING, KY STATED THAT "THERE HAVE BEEN MANY ILLEGALITIES IN THE FIRST AND SECOND POSTING OF CANDIDATES...THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF HAS NOT APPLIED THE LAW...THEREFORE NO ONE CAN BE BOUND TO RESPECT IT."

10. ANSWERING A REPORTER'S QUESTION ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF THE AN QUANG BUDDHISTS ON HIS DECISION, KY STRESSED THAT HIS DECISION DEPENDS ON A SOUNDING OF MANY OPNIONS AND GROUPS.

11. COMMENTING ON NEWS REPORTS THAT HE FAVORS A REDUCTION OF THE ARMED FORCES AND CONCESSIONS ON COALITION GOVERNMENT, KY AGREED THAT HE SUPPORTS A SMALLER MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT BUT AFFIRMED HIS OPPOSITION TO COALITION GOVERNMENT. HE ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH DR. KISSINGER WERE PRIVATE AND THAT ONLY INFORMATION RELEASED BY HIMSELF MAY BE CONSIDERED OFFICIALLY CORRECT.

12. FOLLOWING THE PRESS CONFERENCE, LE VAN THAI, KY'S MANAGER, AND NHI LANG, OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR KY'S RUNNING MATE, TRUONG VINH LE, TOLD EMBOFFS THAT THE ATTITUDE OF THE AN QUANG BUDDHISTS WOULD BE A "DECISIVE" FACTOR IN KY'S DECISION. THAI STATED THAT AN QUANG PRESENTLY INTENDS TO BOYCOTT THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, BUT HE WILL SEE RECTOR THICH THIEN HOA IMMEDIATELY TO SEEK CHURCH SUPPORT. BOTH THAI AND LANG IMPLIED THAT KY WISHES TO RUN. NHI LANG SAID HE THOUGHT THE BUDDHISTS WOULD BACK KY. HE ALSO REMARKED THAT IF AN QUANG BALKED, KY MIGHT STILL AGREE TO RUN BUT POSE CONDITIONS THAT WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO THIEU (I.E. REPLACEMENT OF PROVINCE CHIEFS), THUS TRANSFERRING TO THE PRESIDENT THE ONUS OF AN UNCONTESTED ELECTION. NHI LANG ALSO BELITTLED PROSPECTS OF IMMEDIATE PUBLIC DISORDERS BUT STATED THAT THE PEOPLE WANT A CHANGE AND THAT CHANGE THEREFORE WILL OCCUR, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. BUNKER